5740, Monroe County Com Sch Corp

PROJECT ABSTRACT

As the editors of eSchool News recently pointed out "The 21st Century learning environment doesn't just wait for teachable moments; it literally creates them at will." Teachers need ready access to new activities, assessments, expertise, and technology to take advantage of these moments, and help each other and their students do the same.

Two goals of this grant proposal explore ways to create new learning environments that increase engagement and empower every student with 21st Century skills. Our students live in a highly connected, digital world. Their learning environment should match the experience outside the classroom. Empowerment and engagement are the keys to raising ALL students' achievement.

The other goal specifically targets the five elementary schools that did not pass AYP this year. The grant will provide funding for an online learning management program. The selected program will be highly adaptive to meet diverse learning needs and be presented using a variety of modalities including visual and auditory.

MCCSC will partner with Eastern Greene Schools (EGS) for their expert skills with Moodle, an open source virtual learning environment, and teaching with highly interactive technologies. Selected staff at MCCSC and Eastern Greene will collaborate regularly to use the equipment purchased with these grant funds to implement student-centric instruction that will be engaging, creative, and innovative. Using Moodle will also give teachers safe access to Web 2.0 tools of social networking and provide a permanent ongoing repository of course materials as well as professional development resources.

An experienced team of researchers from Indiana University will also partner with MCCSC and EGS Led by Daniel Hickey, an Associate Professor of Learning Sciences, the team will work closely with lead teachers to identify, test, and refine innovative web-based English Language activities (ELA). They will also develop "participatory" and "portfolio" assessments for these new media activities. These assessments will be carefully aligned to the most important state reading and writing standards. Much of the actual interaction between IU researchers and MCCSC/EG faculty will consist of helping teachers share the informal low stakes evidence from these assessments to refine the way these activities are enacted, in order to obtain consistent evidence of increased understanding on rigorous classroom assessments, and statistically significant evidence of improved achievement on proxy items for Indiana's new ELA end of course assessments.

The staff from MCCSC and EG will form a Professional Technology Learning Community. They will meet frequently in virtual space using an IP based video conferencing technology like Skype. They will also meet face to face bi-monthly to collaborate on projects and work through problems that they have encountered.

Equipment purchased with this grant will include netbooks for 1-1 computer use in English classrooms, interactive white boards and visual presenters for use in secondary science classrooms and elementary classrooms to increase hands-on and interactive classroom participation, and web cams to facilitate video conferencing. Engagement will also be enhanced by the use of a license for online multi-media resources. An online learning management program will also be purchased.